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ABSTRACT

The topic of this paper is the "new sociology of education" (NSOE) and its origins in the early 1970's. One aim of this paper is to argue that the regressive return to a rigid and ahistorical academic curriculum is not the only alternative. A second theme is the suggestion that the NSOE took a highly unreflective view of the role of academic subjects in educational studies. The paper argues that academic work in education is inescapably involved in the wider movements and forces for social change and therefore there is no escape from a clearer and more explicit sense of its political purposes. Three aspects of the NSOE are discussed: (1) its relation to the questions of educational inequalities; (2) its prioritizing of curriculum as a topic for the NSOE; and (3) its emphasis on teachers and teacher educators as agents of progressive change. The focus of the NSOE on the school curriculum is also considered. The final section is a sketch of the implications of the arguments offered as they relate to the different circumstances found in the United Kingdom. Appended are 34 references. (SI)

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1 Academic Disciplines and the study of education

One consequence of recent government policy on the Initial and Further Professional Training of Teachers has been that those subjects that have often been called the 'foundation' disciplines of education (I am referring here particularly to philosophy,sociology and psychology) have lost their previously dominant position[1]. This is closely related to the sharp reduction in full-time one year secondments for teachers, a kind of provision which is increasingly being replaced by a variety of shorter programmes which are geared to helping teachers deal with specific practical problems that are identified by LEA's. Although such developments reflect an overdue attempt on the part of institutions of Higher Education to develop courses with greater relevance and applicability, there is a danger that one outcome will be that systematic and disciplined based research and study will be increasingly marginalised. In response to the demand for flexibility, modular courses are being developed, as well as whole new areas of study, but it likely that these will include only small amounts of work based on the 'traditional' disciplines. The extent to which all this has happened with hardly any serious reflection or debate is disturbing .This lack of debate is particularly surprising when the parallel is drawn with the growth of non-academic prevocational courses for students at 14 and 16+. Just as in the study of education the links with academic disciplines is being weakened, so in the later years of secondary schooling 'prevocational' courses have dispensed with the traditional school subjects and their criteria of knowledge. This suggests that we are witnessing something more fundamental than a threat to the security of a few sociologists and philosophers.

Practitioners within these disciplines have appeared, usually by their silence, to be on the retreat, and show little signs of other than resigned acceptance of their diminished role. What is urgently needed is (a) a consideration of the deeper forces that might underly the changes that I have referred to, and (b) a critical examination of where these disciplines have taken us, both in

[1]There has always been some argument about which disciplines were truly 'foundation' and recently a number of new candidates have been proposed(e.g linguistics). I am more concerned here with challenges to the idea of **any** academic disciplines being the foundation of applied studies in education, and with what the possible alternatives may be .

relation to each other and in relation to their ability to comment on the dramatic and far reaching changes that are currently confronting both policymakers and practitioners in education. I can here only touch on the issues involved.

This paper is offered as a contribution to the critical examination of the disciplines using the sociology of education as an example. It examines one small initiative, the emergence(and demise) of the 'new sociology of education' in the 1970's which was at the time the subject of considerable professional and political controversy in a number of countries. Despite its weaknesses the 'new sociology of education' did take advantage of the much wider climate of political and cultural radicalism of the time to bring questions of the form and content of the academic curriculum onto the agenda of educational debate. In the paper that follows I develop a number of themes of which I shall touch briefly on two here.

First I argue that in its concern to demonstrate the social exclusiveness of academic knowledge, the NSOE replaced specialist or academic subject knowledge by popular consciousness or common sense as an equally unexamined basis for curricula. If there is one lesson that can be learnt from the 1980's, it is how readily popular consciousness, aided by the tabloid press, was appropriated in directions totally at odds with the radical aims espoused by the the sociology of education of the 1970's.

One of the aims of this paper is to argue that the regressive return to a rigid and ahistorical academic curriculum, such as that suggested by the new National Curriculum guidelines, is not the only alternative. School subjects are one particular historical form of systematising knowledge and going beyond experience and common sense. They have a history in the emergence of the early forms of mass schooling in the 19th century, when the main parameters of our current academic curriculum were laid down and given their institutional base. 19th Century mass schooling was not common schooling for all, but divided schooling and school subjects emerged as part of that divided structure. What is needed is an exploration of the different forms that organising knowledge that could be part of genuinely common schooling.

The second but closely related theme of this paper is to suggest that the 'new sociology of education' (NSOE) took a highly unreflective view of the role of academic subjects in educational studies. The issues at stake are much wider than the limited concerns of this paper. They touch on questions of the social basis of intellectual work and the role of sociologists (and others) as intellectuals. They also relate to the forms that systematically organised knowledge can take, that I referred to in connection with school subjects. What are the implications of the demise of academic disciplines in educational studies? Can it only lead to a kind of directionless pragmatism when only the surface issues are addressed? Does this demise offer possibilities for finding new bases for theoretical work that are not bound by the traditional disciplines and their interprofessional rivalries? What would be involved in ensuring that reformed academic disciplines or alternatives to them might be transformed by the experience of practitioners rather than be imposed on it? How might social theory help practitioners and others take account of the wider social and economic changes within which education is inevitably embedded.

Some researchers are beginning to to argue that the current transformations of global capitalism are undermining the whole basis and credibility of academic subjects(natural sciences as much as arts and social sciences) as the main institutions for the production of knowledge. Wexler(1988) for example suggests that in the USA, corporate capitalism, with its demands for technical efficiency and the solution of immediate practical problems, has become disenchanted with the typical University-based organisation of knowledge. Within this scenario, new kinds of research institution are emerging, which are not tied to the conservatism of academic cultures, and which attract an increasing proportion of the private funding that used to go to Universities.There is some parallel with the emergence of politically directed 'think tanks' in this country though on a much smaller scale.

It may be that we are entering a period in which the values and interests of those involved in even quite esoteric research are becoming more and more visible and contested. If so, then it will be necessary to reappraise forms of intellectual work such as the educational disciplines and to ask whether their assumptions about autonomy and objectivity are still appropriate. This paper argues

that academic work in education is inescapably involved in the wider movements and forces for social change and that therefore there is no escape from a clearer and more explicit sense of its political purposes. The positive outcome could be that such a clarity of political direction could on the one hand make the contributions of the academic disciplines to applied studies more obvious and on the other it could give a direction and sense of purpose to discipline-based work that is often lacking. I turn now to the specific topic of this paper, the 'new sociology of education'and its origins in the early 1970's.

2 Origins of the "new sociology of education'

I have subtitled this paper[2] ' Some lessons from a critique of the new sociology of education (NSOE)'[3]. As the term itself is open to various interpretations and often overlaps with the terms 'radical' (Moore 1988) and 'critical' sociologies of education (Young 1986,1987), I would like to begin by locating quite specifically the body of work that I am referring to as the NSOE. It is usually connected to a number of closely related publishing events:

(i) The appearance in 1971 of the book Knowledge and Control (Young 1971) subtitled 'new directions for the SOE'.

(ii) The launch of the first Open University course in the SOE-School and Society, for which **Knowledge and Control** was a set book. That meant that not only were several thousand teachers who registered for the course obliged to purchase the book but that it was available at what was even then a remarkably low price. Both developments undoubtedly played major roles in the early dissemination of its ideas.

(iii) Less than two years later Penguin published a small reader edited by Nell Keddie (Keddie 1973) which introduced to a wide English readership the work of the American sociolinguist, William Labov.

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[2] An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Annual Meeting of the AERA(Division G) in New Orleans in April 1988.Since then I have benefitted from a number of comments. I should particularly like to thank Lynne Chisholm and Ken Spours as well as Michael Apple who was the formal respondent when the paper was initially presented.

[3] I have dealt with the political and intellectual context of sociology of education in the 1960's in more detail in Young (1987)

It was in 1973 that the term 'new sociology of education' was coined in an article in an English teacher education journal (Gorbutt 1973), in which the connection was first made between the NSOE analysis of the curriculum and the role of teachers as agents of radical change. Knowledge and Control (K&C) was less explicit about its political objectives (a point that I shall return to). Rather it set out to chart a new course for the SOE as an intellectual,or more correctly,an academic field. It aimed to define the field of enquiry as distinct from being derivative of social stratification research and to assert that its primary topic of study must be the specifically educational processes of curriculum and pedagogy. In doing this it set itself apart from earlier work in the field both in the US and UK which had concentrated on input/output models of schools and paid very little attention to educational processes. It was this attempt to define the intellectual field of the SOE around the problem of school knowledge, its definition and transmission, that held together the highly diverse and in some cases theoretically contradictory set of papers collected in the book K&C.

Almost immediately the theoretical differences within this attempt to define the field became explicit. On the one hand there were the Durkheimian structural analyses of Bernstein and Bourdieu and on the other hand the anti-positivist sociology of knowledge approach much influenced by the remarkable early papers by C.Wright Mills (1939.1940) and represented in K&C by the papers by Geoff Esland, Nell Keddie and myself. Of course such a distinction is oversimplified, but for the purposes of this paper it is useful as it is that anti-positivist tradition, (with its particular focus on the curriculum) and later attempts to reconceptualise it, that I shall identify as the 'new sociology of education'. The Durkheimian tradition, to which it was initially much indebted,and which was created in the U.K by Basil Bernstein has developed quite separately,though some interesting connections have recently been made (Moore 1988).

The NSOE as an intellectual tradition and as a group of researchers and teachers was short-lived, partly on account of its own theoretical limitations, some of which I discuss later, and partly on account of changes in the wider political and economic circumstances in which a focus on teachers as agents of change became increasingly unrealistic.The oversimplifications of some of

its earliest formulations and popularisations and particularly its dogmatic rejection of the concept 'social structure' received their most systematic critique from Geoff Whitty (1974). His work led to our joint efforts at reconceptualisation in the two collections that we co-edited and later in his own book Sociology and School Knowledge (Whitty 1986). The two collections **Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge** (Whitty and Young 1976) and **Society State and Schooling** (Young and Whitty 1977) represented an end of the NSOE as a distinctive tradition in the UK, though some its ideas can be found in more recent work in the sociology of the curriculum(e.g.Hammersley and Hargreaves 1983). It was marginalised in a leading Anglo-American Reader in the sociology of education (Karabel and Halsey), but was taken up and developed in the field of curriculum theory in the U.S.A, most notably in the early work of Michael Apple. It is interesting that there has been a sudden burst of commentaries and reviews by Canadian and French researchers in the mid 1980's (Forquin 1983,1985; Trottier 1987(a),1987(b).

. Why then is the NSOE worth bothering about? Why should we assume that there are significant lessons to be learnt from this brief flowering of intellectual radicalism that perhaps owed more to a political naivety born of the aspirations of the 1960's than to systematic research and theory?

3 Early responses

I would like to draw briefly on a number of quite diverse responses to the NSOE in the 1970's before attempting a more systematic analysis. The abiding memory for me of the responses to K&C in the early 1970's was the level of anger and antagonism generated among political groupings who would have been unlikely to have agreed on anything else. First there was the 'political right', then unlike now, a very marginal group in the UK-particularly in education. The best example is a publication,in 1977, by an organisation called the Institute of Conflict Studies,of a pamphlet called Marxist and Radical Penetration: The Attack on Higher Education . It told of teachers coming into the schools with "Knowledge & Control in their blood stream" ready to "soften up British youth for the Trotskyist takeover". With less political polemic but with no less anxiety was the response of educational philosophers-and even some sociologists. They wrote newspaper and journal articles with titles like "the abyss of relativism" (Martin

1978) and "Knowledge out of Control" (Pring 1973). They warned of the dangers of bringing the heady ideas of the sociology of knowledge from its safe and rareified place in the philosophy of science into the practical arena of curriculum decision making.

There are of course many parallels to these attempts to restrict to an elite what are seen as potentially subversive ideas; by Churches and politicians as well as educationists. For example, in 19th Century England religious leaders were largely successful in keeping geology out of the school curriculum on the grounds that it might undermine young people's faith in God. However in the 1970's it was not faith in God but in Western Civilisation that seemed to be the issue. In suggesting that the academic curriculum was not a benign selection of the best in the culture, but a particular elite's selection of knowledge largely in the interests of preserving their own position - the NSOE was seen as challenging something almost sacred. Perhaps the strange thing in retrospect is the surprise that such reactions created. I doubt if those who identified with NSOE are the only radical intellectual group in history who not only wanted to subvert the established institutions of education but also to do it unchallenged. This of course raises much wider issues about the contradictory position of middle class radicals in prestigious institutions like Universities.

The response from sections of the left, particularly the traditional Communist Party Left, was very similar. For them the academic curriculum was something that the labour movement had fought to get access to for their sons and daughters. At a time of at least some increase in educational opportunity, such questioning as that proposed by the NSOE was seen as a threat to the whole basis of a left educational politics that was committed to working with the educational establishment to expand access. A number of articles appeared in journals, with a wide circulation among teachers(eg Simon 1975), which attacked the NSOE for suggesting that the academic curriculum had a social class basis and could not be the basis for a truly comprehensive education. They claimed that the NSOE,in giving a kind of legitimacy to the academic exclusion of working class children, was "encouraging educational apartheid" and in a phrase I remember well, preparing them to be little more than helots.

Other less formal and less documented responses were from individual teachers and teacher educators who commented (I quote one) "it (K&C) gave me the confidence to think what I had always intuitively felt but not had the confidence to express".

4 Practical outcomes

I would like to link these observations to one final point about responses. The NSOE was associated with both a critique of the academic curriculum as a form of domination and with supporting non-hierarchical forms of pedagogy, student-centred as opposed to subject-centred learning and breaking down the barriers between school and non-school knowledge. In the very different political climate of the 1980's, we find both the critique and the alternatives represented within English educational policy but in quite different contexts from those hoped for or expected by the NSOE.
From as early as 1976 there has been renewed criticism of the English academic curriculum as a contributing cause to Britain's industrial decline. It has been seen as deflecting successful students from their proper future in high technology businesses and denying the unsuccessful the possibility of any skills or competences (Barnett 1980, Weiner 1982). On the other hand, we find the elements of non-hierarchical pedagogy (expressed in the idea of the "negotiated curriculum") forming part of programmes for low achievers and the young unemployed. Such courses are rather euphemistically called pre-vocational but can all too easily exclude those they recruit from from progressing either to more focussed vocational or academic studies (Ranson1984; Green 1984; Spours 1988).

It is then this contradictory combination of outrage from the left and right, anxiety from liberal academics,a sense of emancipation from some teachers that suggests to me that a more critical examination of some of the assumptions of the NSOE is worthwhile. The fact that some of its at least implicit alternatives are being incorporated into what are potentially highly divisive new programmes gives this an added urgency. I shall argue that though there was undoubtedly something emancipatory in the connections that the NSOE made between power and knowledge in curricula, its critics were in important ways right.

I want therefore to turn to two key themes of the NSOE:
(1) its specific claim to be offering a new approach, distinct from earlier traditions in the field, and,
(2) its specific approach to the school curriculum.

5 What was new?

In relation to its claim to be offering 'new directions', I shall consider three aspects of the NSOE :
(a) its relation to the question of educational inequalities
(b) its prioritizing of curriculum as a topic for the SOE
(c) its emphasis on teachers and teacher educators as agents of progressive change.

(a) What was not recognized at the time but is striking in retrospect, was the extent of similarity of political concerns between those identified with the NSOE and those whose work it criticized eg Halsey, Floud, JWB Douglas and Glass. For both groups the primary political question in English education was the persistence of social class inequalities. Furthermore, in so far as work in the NSOE was explicit about what it meant by social class, it took over the broad distinction between manual and non-manual occupations that was used by the earlier sociologists, paying no attention to other forms of social division. The NSOE minimised the importance of political similarities among sociologists and gave greater emphasis to the theoretical and methodological issues that divided them. It was therefore making some quite definite, though at the time, not explicit assumptions about the nature of academic work in education that at least need examining.

It would be my view that there were elements of inter-professional rivalry in the NSOE position that led it to stress theoretical differences within the discipline rather than political similarities. As governments, certainly in Western Europe, use a variety of strategies from persuasion to bribery to bring their academics into line, the perspective adopted by the NSOE which treated academic work as an autonomous source of educational change, seems increasingly untenable. If the NSOE had emphasised its political priorities to overcome educational inequalities rather than its theoretical distinctiveness, it would have sought alliances with the politically sympathetic survey researchers of the earlier tradition of SOE rather than seeing them as a kind of 'old guard' or

professional opposition. There is also a deeper point which I cannot do justice to here. It could be argued that the NSOE tried to replace a reformist politics around social class inequalities with a radical though undeveloped 'cultural' politics. However as they both neglected questions of gender and race(Acker 1981) , it is not surprising that both the 'old' and 'new' SOE's failed to deal adequately with educational inequalities.

(b). The most distinctive and still to me most important contribution of the NSOE was to make the processes of selection and exclusion of knowledge by teachers in their classroom practice, the central topic for the sociology of education. The argument that these processes could be shown to embody power relations both within the school and in the wider society was both important and at the time new. However, there was also a tendency to treat these processes as if they were the only legitimate concerns of the SOE and therefore to neglect the earlier researchers concern with the wider selective processes governing pupil access. The sociological analysis of the curriculum would undoubtedly have been strengthened by formulating research to link these two sets of processes.

(c) The final distinction between the so-called old and NSOE was in their views of their audience. The earlier work saw itself within the Fabian tradition of policy-oriented research. It assumed that politicians and administrators were reasonably rational people who would act on carefully researched findings and that they all shared a concern with eliminating inequalities. This point is well demonstrated in a more recent example of work within that tradition (Halsey,Heath and Ridge,1980). The NSOE implicitly distrusted such people as 'part of the establishment', and directed its attention towards other academics, particularly teacher educators and teachers themselves. Thus one audience or agency of change was replaced with another. No attempt was made to analyse the kind of State the UK education system was a part of, nor to discover whether teachers were in fact responsive to the ideas of the NSOE and how in practical terms they could become agents of change independently of or even in opposition to administrators.

In this section I have taken three examples from the NSOE to illustrate the problems that arise when academic work with

progressive purposes gives priority to its theoretical concerns within the discipline over an analysis of its position in the wider balance of political forces.

6 NSOE and the school curriculum

I turn next to the focus of the NSOE on the school curriculum. As the most distinctive feature of the NSOE, it also gave its critics most anxiety as I mentioned earlier. It arose directly in the search for an alternative explanation of working class inequality and low achievement to the concept of educability that had been developed within the earlier SOE (Young 1986). Persistent low acievement by working class pupils had been explained in terms of deficiency in cultural background as well as wider social inequalities. In its more simplistic forms it offered solutions of (a) educational expansion and (b) compensation for disadvantage as if the cultural form of educational provision played no part in its provision. In direct opposition to this approach, the NSOE focussed on the structure of the academic curriculum as the major source of the unequal distribution of education. Its separate single subjects, hierachies of valued knowledge and its exclusion of non-school knowledge were analysed as an instruments of social class exclusion. The ideological power of the academic curriculum was identified by the success with which it was able to convince people that it was the only way of organising knowledge that gave real intellectual power to students. It therefore gave legitimacy to the view that those who did not succeed in its terms were for all practicable purposes ineducable

As a framework, the NSOE critique gave rise to a number of empirical studies of struggles for curricular legitimacy that lent support its claims (e.g. Young 1972,Vulliamy 1976). Its weakness was the way it slipped from being an analytical perspective on curriculum practice to being what I would call a kind of 'oppositional description' of how the curriculum really was. This slip from analysis to description had the effect of treating the academic curriculum as if it had only ideological power; in other words the focus was restricted to how it sustained them existing unequal distribution of resources. This meant that the cultural power of the curriculum as a source of real understandings, which despite its ideology gave at least some students more control in the world in which they were going to have to live, was neglected.

The NSOE analysis of the curriculum as ideological power left the alternative as no curriculum (a kind of deschooling!) or some notion of a curriculum based on experience, a notion very well criticised by Hall (1983). This idea has been taken up as mentioned earlier within pre-vocational programmes with potentially divisive consequences particularly for low achieving (usually working class) students (Green 1986). A number of sociologists in the late 1970's and 1980's attempted to solve this problem, by drawing on the idea of a working class curriculum (Cohen 1985;Whitty 1986) based on 'really useful knowledge', a Chartist idea from the early 19th Century (Johnson 1980). The idea that there could be knowledge that was located in the circumstances of a particular social class, made sense in the very specific and short-lived Chartist experience when skilled craftsmen owned the means though not the relations of production. However whether the concept of 'really useful knowledge' can be given a new meaning in the very different circumstances of the 1980's is far less clear as Johnson himself points out (Johnson 1983). Decisions about workplaces are increasingly removed from centres of production to centres of research and planning which in many cases are not in the same country.

I would like now to summarize the weaknesses which I see contributed to the failure of the NSOE to fulfil the aspirations that some of us had for it (or indeed the fears of others).

(i) It lacked a political analysis of academic work in education and therefore overemphasized disputes within the discipline and failed to build links with others within the sociology of education and beyond.

(ii) In emphasizing academic exclusion through the curriculum over external forms of social selection in the perpetuating inequalities, it gave a misleading autonomy to teachers as agents of curriculum change and neglected an analysis of the links between the social class basis of curriculum knowledge and. the social class basis of student selection.

(iii) In failing to distinguish the ideological from the cultural power of curricula,it had no criteria for developing and assessing curricular alternatives.

It is my view that in seeking to undermine the objectivity and autonomy of the academic curriculum and in demonstrating its social nature, the NSOE was tackling the right issue. However it

failed to be specific in how it conceptualised the social.
The 1960's and 1970's was a period of considerable educational expansion in all Western countries and the goals of greater equality in education were widely shared across the political spectrum. This was the context in which the NSOE raised fundamental questions as to whether this greater equality could be achieved without substantial transformation of the organisation of knowledge in curricula. The political responses I referred to at the beginning of the paper were an indication of the kind of interests threatened in even recognising that such changes were conceivable.
The NSOE's proposals for the curriculum, in that they attempted to invert the balance of power away from experts to the community, were in theory both progressive and populist. However, they lacked popular support partly on account of their often unnecessarily obscure language but also because they lacked both a strategy and practicable alternatives. It is only when critical academic work is extended to pose real alternatives that it can gain popular support and be the basis for democratic change. This is not just a comment on the NSOE but on much of the marxist inspired SOE of the late 1970's and 1980's which followed.

7 A Possible way forward

In the final section of this paper I want to offer a very brief sketch out the implications of my argument for the very different circumstances that we now find ourselves in,at least in the UK, as our third successive Conservative government puts its own priorities for educational reform near the top of its political agenda.

I want to refer first to the political context of academic work that I touched on at the beginning of the paper and then to the question of the school curriculum. The conditions that sustained the Universities as a basis for autonomous academic work and allowed such debates as those in the 1970's between the different SOE's are fast disappearing. I would identify these conditions as the dominance of (i) peer group evaluation of bids for research funding,and (ii) the academic disciplines as the basis for educational studies.

Very little research money is now available through the traditional peer evaluation procedures of the Economic and Social Research Council, which no longer has its specific committees for subjects

like sociology. Research funds now are mostly from large national and EEC bodies who tender for competing bids for contract research according to their priorities. The autonomy of University teaching in education depended upon central Government covering the bulk of the staff replacement costs for the teachers on such courses, leaving it to University staff to make the decisions about their content and organisation. This was the basis for the so-called 'foundation disciplines' of education (such as sociology and philosophy) being the dominant form of post graduate study in the 1970's. The situation is now that instead of funding any University courses applied for by teachers, central government provides grants for local authorities and sometimes individual schools to choose, within certain national guidelines, what courses teachers will be able to attend. These choices inevitably reflect needs percieved by the local authorities and schools which are rarely expressed in terms of academic disciplines. In these circumstances it becomes crucial for sociologists of education to attempt to understand the deeper historical changes that are involved and what the options are both for teachers and for academic work in education.

It is my view that we are witnessing something much more than the vindictive philistinism towards the social sciences of a right wing conservative government. It is the process of modernisation which is being experienced in the health service, in housing and in the restructuring of the economy as well as in education. In the UK modernisation is taking a particularly regressive and divisive form which is licensed by a large parliamentary majority and an ideology which equates democratic accountability with consumer choice. However this does not mean that modernisation is some kind of inevitable historical process, but rather that it has quite contradictory possibilities.

What I mean by modernisation is the growth of specialisation across the whole division of labour, the parallel extension of the use of technology and the attempt to widen the level of participation in education without extending the resources available. This means that more people have more kinds of specialist knowledge but the problems of linking and connecting specialisms and the accountability of specialists to non-specialists are greater than ever. The present Conservative government is encouraging this trend to greater specialisation but is relying on a modern version of consumerism "where the rational isolated individual makes choices

between alternatives" (Sassoon 1987) to resolve the problems of linking and connection. It is in this contradiction between specialisation and participation, that the crucial role for sociology (or other critical studies) in education lies. This does not involve rejecting the trend to greater specialisation but in making explicit its directedness. Specialisation is not some neutral process but one that involves real political alternatives. In particular it is important to show how the question of relating the increase in specialisation to greater participation cannot be resolved in terms of consumer choice but by new kinds of relations between specialists and non specialists and new forms of knowledge and how it is organised. These changes therefore have the potential for creating greater democratic participation, provided it can be shown that within the process of modernisation the new forms of divisiveness that we currently experience are not the only option.

The curriculum is also undergoing 'modernisation' though in a highly contradictory way. Compulsory technology across the curriculum up to 16 and some form of work experience for all after 14, are two examples of many. The power relations that the NSOE identified as embodied in the academic curriculum have shifted. They are now located in the division between a modernised academic curriculum which is found increasingly in the private sector and probably in the new privileged public sector of City Technology Colleges (Chitty 1987) and the increasing diversity of vocational and prevocational programmes that are found in state secondary schools and colleges.

My critique of the NSOE would suggest that neither the modernised academic curriculum nor the new vocational programmes offer an adequate basis for minimising social divisions. A democratic curriculum alternative that is conducive to reducing rather than sustaining social divisions is one that builds on rather than rejects the modernising tendencies in order to create a more unified educational system. In such a system reformed academic subjects would be a core which itself would be oriented to the study and transformation of work and technology. Such a curriculum would have to make explicit two sources of current tension which existing models tend to avoid . First there is the tension between the intellectual demands of school subjects and the practical and also intellectual demands of the world of work(Spours and Young 1988). Secondly there is the tension

between the 'world of work' as equated with employment and the unpaid work of family life.

If the SOE is to recover its credibility and the radical potential that was claimed for the NSOE in the 1970's, it has to make explicit that, contrary to currently fashionable ideas that social divisions are inevitable, the achievement of an increasingly democratic society is a realistic political option for which the modernising tendencies that I have referred to provide the conditions. The changed circumstances of academic work that I introduced at the beginning of this paper create the possibility that more sociologists and other academics will be prepared to work through these principles with practitioners in particular contexts, and as Anne Sassoon puts it, " to undertake cultural activity in a modern form appropriate to advanced capitalism." (Sassoon 1987)

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